



SEPTEMBER 2022

# THE FRONT LINE

A Southern States PBA Newsletter

VOL. 1 - Issue 1



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## Dear fellow SSPBA members

BY CHRIS SKINNER

SOUTHERN STATES POLICE BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT

I wanted to take this opportunity to introduce you to the first digital issue of the Front Line newsletter. The Front Line newsletter, however, is not an original idea, but a great part of our history.

The Front Line newsletter was PBA's original member publication. Beginning in 1992, the one-person communication department of the organization laid out a black and white newsletter which was produced six to ten times per year. The newsletter was typically composed of 24 pages and included a Southern States section with general association news, a Legal section and sections for the various divisions that submitted articles.



Chris Skinner – Southern States Police Benevolent Association President

A scan of the front pages of archived editions of The Front Line reveals a variety of SSPBA news over the years: “SSPBA assists passage of the Bulletproof Vest Act,” featuring a photo of PBA staff with President Bill Clinton; “Southern States PBA prepares to handle Y2K glitches”; “Barr, eight cosponsors introduce congressional due process bill,” including photos of PBA-sponsored members of Congress; “Southern States PBA moves into new headquarters in McDonough, GA”; and “Georgia governor signs bill at PBA office” along with a photo of Gov. Roy Barnes signing the Officers’ Indemnity Bill in the conference room of the SSPBA office. This quick review shows that PBA efforts to provide services to members and to improve the law enforcement profession have been the driving force of PBA for many years.

In 2001, The Front Line evolved to more of a magazine format as it had its first full-color cover. It was still produced and distributed multiple times a year.

In 2006, SSPBA moved to the yearly format of the Blue Review magazine. The Blue Review has been just what the title says: a review of activity for SSPBA from the year before. The 2021 edition, which was recently mailed to all members as well as panel attorneys and legislators, is a 72-page full color magazine filled with articles and photos covering activity from across SSPBA.

Now SSPBA has taken a step that harkens back to its early days as we update The Front Line for 2022. We plan to produce and publish it quarterly so that all members can be updated on SSPBA and PBF activity.

For this issue we chose to cover all our eleven states so the reader could get a full breadth of the layout and some of the stories we will hope to cover. Subsequent issues will have some mainstay articles and will cover five or six states. The states not covered in the second issue will be covered in the next one, and so on.

We will feature articles on members, attorney spotlights, legal cases, PBA/Foundation events, scholarship recipients, memorial/recovery funds, political endorsements, legislative success stories, and membership, growth to name a few.

We also want to encourage you, the member, to feel free to submit ideas for stories or to author the story yourself. Everyone likes a good story, and you, more than anyone, see these opportunities every day. To submit a story idea, please email Randy Byrd at [rbyrd@sspba.org](mailto:rbyrd@sspba.org) or Justin Blackburn at [jblackburn@sspba.org](mailto:jblackburn@sspba.org).

In closing, we want to thank each of you for your service to our communities. We are thankful that you chose us to represent you as you provide that service. We certainly are proud to serve you. We hope you enjoy this issue.

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# Southern States PBA Mourns the Loss of SSPBA Board Member

By RANDY BYRD  
FOUNDATION AND MEDIA RELATIONS



Johnny Bohanan

The Southern States Police Benevolent Association is deeply saddened about the passing of SSPBA Board Member Johnny Bohanan on June 4th. Johnny had recently been diagnosed with stomach cancer, and after being hospitalized, was released under hospice care to his home. Johnny passed away the next day, surrounded by his loving family.

Johnny lived his entire life in Sevier County, Tenn. and began his full-time law enforcement career in 1990. In addition to his public service and service as a member of the SSPBA Board of Directors, he also served as the President of the Smoky Mountains Chapter and as the Tennessee Division President. In 2019, he was honored to be appointed by Governor Bill Lee to serve on the Board of Directors of the state's retirement system (TCRS). Johnny was also recently elected to serve as a Sevier County Commissioner District 4 Seat B.

Johnny was an avid sports enthusiast who coached and umpired Little League baseball and softball in Sevierville and Pigeon Forge for many years. He also enjoyed supporting both his sons in their athletic pursuits throughout the years.

Johnny is survived by his wife, Phillis, and their three children: Holly, Tray, and Andrew. The visitation and funeral service was held on June 9th in Sevierville. The graveside service was June 10th in Pigeon Forge. Johnny's complete obituary can be found at: <https://www.atchleyfuneralhome.com/obituaries/Johnny-Lee-Bohanan-Jr?obId=25038596#/obituaryInfo>

A PBA contingent met with the family at the funeral home and attended the visitation and graveside service to show their respect for Johnny and offer their support for Phillis and their children.

Included were Chief Operating Officer Renee Dixon, SSPBA President Chris Skinner, SSPBA Sr. Vice President Dave Soderberg, Director of Organizational Services - East Region, Beth Dyke, Operations Manager Joan Fabian, Executive Director of VAPBA Sean McGowan and Randy Byrd, Foundation and Media Relations. This group was able to spend some quality time with Phillis and the children. Phillis wanted everyone to know how much Johnny loved the PBA and the PBA staff and how much she appreciated the PBA being there for her family. The group also met with many of the local PBA leaders who were also present to show their respect for Johnny.



Johnny with his wife Phillis, and their three children Holly, Tray, and Andrew

President Skinner had the following to say about Johnny: "It was my pleasure to serve with Johnny on the SSPBA board since 2014. His insight and input on the board helped guide the critical decisions that we made on behalf of our Association and members." Skinner added. "Johnny will be missed, and the SSPBA will continue to support Phillis and the family as they mourn his loss."

The SSPBA and the Police Benevolent Foundation have assisted the family with a memorial fund for medical expenses. Donations can be made at: <https://pbfi.networkforgood.com/projects/162205-detective-johnny-bohanan-memorial-fund>

\*Beth Dyke (Director of Organizational Services - East Region) contributed to this article.

## South Carolina Member Receives Trilogy Award

By RANDY BYRD  
FOUNDATION AND MEDIA RELATIONS

Sergeant Matt Smetana of the Mt. Pleasant Police Department recently completed a three-part leadership series through the FBI Law Enforcement Executive Development Association. FBI-LEEDA is a 501(c)(3) corporation. According to their website, the goal for this nonprofit is to advance the science and art of law enforcement leadership and promote the exchange of information to improve law enforcement management practices through training, education, and networking among police professionals across the United States and

Smetana was raised in Butler, PA just north of Pittsburgh. He grew up in a small neighborhood surrounded with a lot of kids his age. They were always playing baseball, football, and riding their bikes everywhere. When the streetlights came on, they knew they were to be home.

Smetana's dad was a navy man stationed at Andrews Air Force base when he met his mother who worked in the commissary. After they were married and his dad's tour was up, they moved back to Butler. His dad worked for Ecolab for over thirty years, and his mom went into the banking business. She retired after his dad passed and now lives in Mt. Pleasant where Smetana works. He has one sister who still lives in Butler with her family.

Smetana attended Butler High School, and as soon as he was old enough to drive, most activities and sports were set aside for cars. By age 17, his dad, uncle and he had rebuilt a 1973 custom Chevy Nova. Cars became a passion for him and his dad who supported his interests. His dad ended up getting a 1966 Chevrolet for himself. The passion continued even after both cars were lost in a house fire. Smetana then built a 1966 Chevy Nova SS for himself, while his dad got a 1972 Chevelle SS.

After graduating from high school, Smetana continued his education and received a graphic arts degree from the Art Institute of Pittsburgh. After college, he worked for a small town on a road crew before working for a Goodyear Truck and Tire Center. He later moved to South Carolina and sold cars for a while.

This pathway turned out to be where he didn't want to be, and he decided to pursue a career in law enforcement. His motivation came from his grandfather. "My grandfather was a Pennsylvania State Trooper who retired from that agency when I was a small child. I still remember seeing him in uniform and telling his stories," he said. A fond recollection was when he showed him pictures of the cars he was assigned through the years.

In 2005, Smetana completed his academy training and started with the Mt. Pleasant Police Department. During his career, he has worked



Sergeant Smetana with the Trilogy Award

beyond. Students are required to complete three modules of training to include the Supervisor Leadership Institute, Command Leadership Institute, and the Executive Leadership Institute. Students that complete this comprehensive program are recognized with the Trilogy Award for their efforts and commitment to becoming a better leader.



Sergeant Smetana patrolling the local waterways

patrol, investigations, traffic, and now as Sergeant for a patrol team and the Harbor unit. His work on the Harbor Unit has led to working with local and federal agencies. His team recently worked a security zone for a ship commissioning for a week in May. They regularly work with the Coast Guard patrolling the local waterways.

When asked who has been the biggest influence in his career, he didn't hesitate by naming Captain Blair Martin. "He has guided me in just about everything in my career," he said.

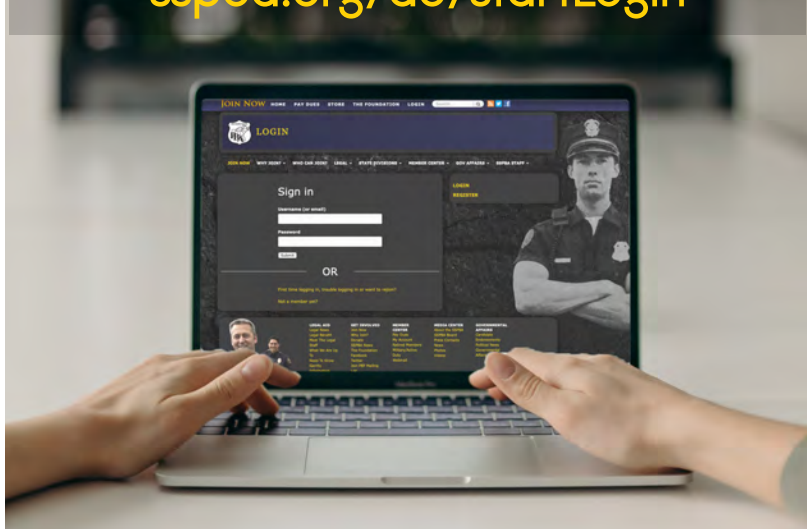
Being a PBA member is very personal for Smetana. In August of 2006 he and his partner were in an officer involved shooting situation. They were both cleared, but Smetana was not a member at the time. "I was encouraged by the officer in the Office of Professional Standards to join the PBA to make sure I had representation should I end up in another officer involved shooting," he said. "I have been a PBA member since," he added.

Smetana is married to his wife Brandi. She worked for the Clerk of Courts before transferring to the police department to work in the training unit as an administrator. They have a 7-year-old son named Elijah. An active child, he loves golf, gymnastics, his

GI Joes, Hot Wheels, and Legos. Smetana's spare time has now transitioned from rebuilding cars to building rifles and other firearms.

We want to congratulate Sergeant Smetana on receiving the Trilogy award and are proud that he chose to be a part of our association.

Update your account info  
today. Login at  
[sspba.org/do/startLogin](https://sspba.org/do/startLogin)



## Virginia Attorney Spotlight

BY JONI FLETCHER CAWTHON  
DIRECTOR OF LEGAL SERVICES

Heather Howard grew up in Abingdon, Va. Her goal was always to figure out a way to go to law school and become an attorney, but she wasn't sure how she would make that happen. When the Appalachian School of Law opened in the southwestern Virginia town of Grundy, she found the opportunity and the scholarship awards to make her dream a reality.



Howard has been a PBA attorney for over eight years

After graduating from law school in 2001, Howard began her career as a Legal Aid attorney, a job in which she learned firsthand that people really need help, particularly in accessing the legal system.

Howard worked as a Legal Aid attorney in the coalfield counties of Virginia before transferring to Central Virginia Legal Aid in Charlottesville, Va. Howard's first opportunity to work in criminal law came about when she took a job with the City of Richmond Office of the Public Defender, where she defended serious criminal cases which arose in the Commonwealth's capital city.

Howard then had the opportunity to come back home to Abingdon, working first as a prosecutor in Russell County and then as a prosecutor in Abingdon. She worked as a prosecutor from 2005-2012, and it is in that capacity where she began to develop relationships with local law enforcement officers. Howard took those connections with her when she joined the law firm of Jesse, Read & Howard as a partner in 2012.

"One thing I quickly learned was that law enforcement officers always needed a lawyer," Howard said. "Whether it was for a divorce or something at work, I think officers knew they could trust me when they needed an attorney."

Howard says that it became clear to her that the world was changing because she began to handle more officer-involved shooting investigations around 2013. She attributes a great deal of that to increased methamphetamine use and the evolution of meth from a "homegrown business" into a cartel-driven enterprise. When PBA member Greg Hogston, who was a lieutenant with Washington County SO at the time, came to her with a plan to promote PBA in the area to provide access to legal coverage for officers, he asked Howard to come on board as a PBA attorney. She was quick to say yes.

"I've known Heather since she started practicing law," Hogston said. "She's the go-to attorney for someone who's in trouble, and she's my go-to attorney for anything." Hogston has assisted with recruiting members and attorneys for PBA throughout his many years of membership. "I tell these PBA members to form a good relationship with commonwealth attorneys who then go into private practice as defense attorneys. These are the well-rounded attorneys that we need." "I originally handled officer-involved shooting

investigations pro bono,” Howard says, “but as I saw criminals becoming more aggressive, I told officers that they had to have legal coverage because no attorney could handle a homicide case pro bono if a criminal trial ensued.” Howard’s advice proved to be on point in 2021 when Bristol police officer Johnathan Brown was indicted for 1) murder, 2) use of a firearm in commission of murder, and 3) malicious shooting into an occupied vehicle just 34 days after a line-of-duty shooting. Brown was a PBA member at the time of the shooting, and Howard was assigned to the case by PBA on the night of the incident. From late December 2021 through April 2022, Howard’s law practice effectively was shut down except for her defense of Brown. On April 27, 2022, a jury found Brown Not Guilty of all charges.

“Thank God Officer Brown had PBA coverage,” Howard said. “If not, it’s quite likely that he would have had a court appointed attorney. On a public servant’s salary, he probably could not have afforded to retain a private attorney for a case of this magnitude, but he definitely could not have afforded all the expert witnesses necessary for his defense.”

“The legal team that we put together for Officer Brown’s defense would not have been possible without the support and backing of PBA,” Howard continued. “If I believed that Officer Brown had a need, I was able to communicate that need to the PBA, and I was always given permission to secure the service that we needed.”

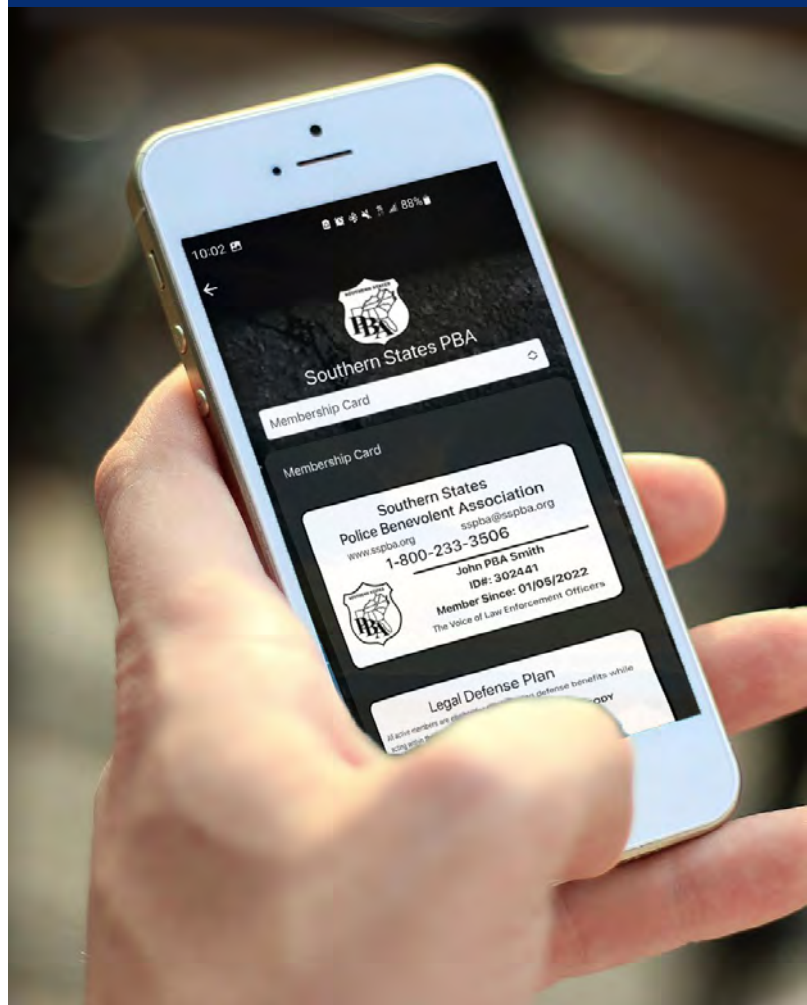
Howard has handled many critical incidents through PBA as well as civil defense cases. She attended the PBA attorney seminar in 2018 in Cary, N.C. and said that she found it to be very beneficial. “The seminar was specifically tailored to defending officers criminally, civilly and internally,” she said. “Representing police officers really is a niche area of the law.”

Howard is active in her local legal community, previously serving as president of the Washington County Bar Association and president of the 28th Judicial District Criminal Defense Bar Association. She has served as a PBA attorney since 2014. Howard continues to sing the praises of PBA. “PBA is a fabulous organization,” she said. “You all

definitely stand behind your mission and deliver on that. PBA is in it because your hearts are in it. That’s very evident in the commitment that PBA has shown in defending officers.”

For any police officer who doesn’t have PBA legal coverage, Howard says it’s like going on patrol without a gun. “When an officer gets ready for work, he or she puts a gun on for protection. Officers need to put on PBA legal coverage protection as well.”

Download the SSPBA  
Membership Portal app today!



# Mississippi PBA Leader Graduates from FBI National Academy

By RANDY BYRD  
FOUNDATION AND MEDIA RELATIONS



Captain Darryl Russell

On March 17th, Captain Darryl Russell of the Hancock County Sheriff's Office graduated from the 281st National Academy in Quantico, Virginia. According to an FBI press release about the graduation, the class consisted of men and women from forty-five states and the District of Columbia. The class included members of law enforcement agencies from thirty-two countries, five military organizations, and six federal and civilian agencies.

Internationally known for its academic excellence, the National Academy offers ten weeks of advanced communication, leadership, and fitness training. Participants must have proven records as professionals within their agencies to attend. On average, these officers have 21 years of law enforcement experience and usually return to their agencies to serve in executive level positions, the press release continued.

Capt. Russell is originally from Waveland, Miss. and graduated from St. Stanislaus College Prep in 2004. After attending the Mississippi Law Enforcement Training Academy in 2008, he

became a full-time officer with the Waveland Police Department.

During his tenure with Waveland PD, he was recognized several times as Officer of the Month, as well as recognized by the Mississippi Office of Highway Safety for dedication to Seatbelt Safety Laws and Child Restraint Laws. He later became an Internationally Certified Child Passenger Safety Technician and Instructor. In addition to his patrol duties, his work included serving on the Special Weapons and Tactics Team and the Mounted Patrol Unit.

In 2012, Captain Russell took a full-time deputy position with the Hancock County Sheriff's Office and was assigned to the City of Diamondhead Division. As one of the first deputies assigned to the Diamondhead Division, he was instrumental in establishing the Division. After a year of serving in the Diamondhead Division in its inception, he was promoted to the Narcotics Division as an agent.

In November of 2013, Captain Russell took command of the Canine Division as a sergeant and was later promoted to lieutenant over the division. By 2018, Captain Russell had expanded the Canine Division from two to seven handlers.

Captain Darryl Russell was appointed in March of 2019 as the Director of Training and Standards where he successfully graduated two classes of reserve deputies. Sheriff Ricky Adam later appointed Capt. Russell as the Narcotics Commander in 2021.

During his career with the Sheriff's Office, he has also served on the agency's Dive Team, as a boat operator for the Marine Division, and as a Team Leader on the Special Response Team.

In addition to his service to the community, Capt. Russell has served in various capacities on the Gulf Coast Chapter board including grievance chair, secretary and now as vice president.

The PBA wants to congratulate Capt. Russell on this career milestone and thank him for his continued service to the members as a chapter leader.

# PBA of Georgia Endorses Gov. Kemp for November Re-election

By KATHARINE JEFACOATS  
COMMUNICATIONS STAFF WRITER

Impressed by four years of strong leadership and consistent support of the law enforcement community, PBA of GA officials are again endorsing Gov. Brian Kemp in the November general election. Kemp took the GOP nomination in May.

law enforcement personnel who put their lives on the line every day to protect and serve Georgians.

"Marty, the girls and I are forever grateful to the law enforcement professionals that continue to put their lives on the line to protect and serve everyday Georgians," he said. "There's not a day that goes by

where we don't pray for these men and women in uniform as they stand in the gap to keep our fellow citizens safe."

Naia said Kemp exercised the courage of his convictions during his term, which spanned some of the most turbulent times in recent history for law enforcement officials across the state and nation.

"Gov. Kemp has shown great leadership in our state," he said, "In these difficult times, he has not made decisions based on political correctness but on what was right for businesses and citizens to safely move

forward in Georgia. When others were painting law enforcement as evil, our governor remained committed to the law enforcement community."

For his part, Kemp said he recognizes the importance of mutual respect and support between his office and law enforcement.

"I'm honored to have the support of the Southern States Police Benevolent Association in this election, and I will continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with law enforcement across our state to build a safer, stronger Georgia," he said.



PBA of Georgia division board members stand with Gov. Brian Kemp after endorsing him for re-election

PBA of GA President Joe Naia said the organization is proud to support Kemp.

"The PBA of Georgia is honored to give our endorsement for a second term," said Naia. "One of my favorite quotes from Frederick Douglass brings to my mind Gov. Kemp's commitment to our community and state – 'A man's rights rest in three boxes: the ballot box, the jury box and the cartridge box.' Gov. Kemp has signed laws to safeguard these three boxes and deserves four more years to keep our state going forward."

Kemp said he and his family are, in turn, grateful to

## Arkansas Member Noted for Saving Lives

By RANDY BYRD  
FOUNDATION AND MEDIA RELATIONS

For the citizens of Ozark and Alma, Ark., Officer Jason Cooper has been a godsend for their communities. During his almost ten-year career, Cooper has been recognized for his heroic efforts in saving the lives of three people.

Officer Cooper was born in Ft. Smith, Ark. and grew up in Alma. He attended Alma High School and graduated with honors in 2009. He continued his education at Arkansas Tech University – Ozark and graduated cum laude with an Associates of Applied Science degree in Law Enforcement in 2012. Cooper was inspired to become a law enforcement officer because of a rough home environment where his family came in contact with law enforcement on a frequent basis. “Because of these interactions” he said, “I was able to see the good that they did and why they are needed in our society.”

After graduation from college, he started his career at the Franklin County Sheriff’s Office, where he worked in detention before becoming a patrol deputy. In 2013, he transferred to the Ozark Police Department. He later became a member of the SWAT team and was an operator for four years.

In February of 2016, Officer Cooper responded with a deputy to a residence that was on fire in Ozark. They both ran into the fully engulfed house with no fire equipment and started escorting people out of the house. Cooper was able to carry a disabled man to safety.

Later that year, Officer Cooper responded to a

call where a baby was choking and not breathing. This response was before EMS or other medical personnel had arrived. Cooper had recently completed CPR training with the department. When he arrived on the scene, the mother handed her baby to him. The baby was turning blue and was not breathing. He immediately began back



Officer Cooper receiving Naloxone Award

thrusts and turned her around to swipe rice cereal from her mouth. The baby began to breathe and cry.

Chief Devan Bramlett wrote in a commendation letter for Cooper’s file about the actions that he took. He said, “You are to be commended for your quick timing and actions on these two different occasions. Your actions on these days no doubt saved lives.”

Officer Cooper later left the OPD and after a short stint with the Mulberry Police Department, he went to work with the Alma Police Department in 2018. He had come full circle to serve the citizens where he spent his childhood.

In August of 2021, Officer Cooper had been working patrol for several years when he responded to a call about an unresponsive man possibly overdosing. The house he responded to was known for drug activity and Cooper was familiar with the residents when he arrived. He was met by the girlfriend of the man, who escorted him to the garage. The man was barely breathing and was declining rapidly. Officer Cooper decided to administer a dose of NARCAN to him. He did not respond after the first dose. He waited a few minutes and gave him another dose and began sternum rubs. EMS arrived on the scene and gave the man two more doses through an IV. He finally regained consciousness on the way to the hospital. It was later learned that he had overdosed on Fentanyl.

Officer Cooper's efforts led to him receiving the Naloxone Lifesaving Award from the University of Arkansas Criminal Justice Institute.

Officer Cooper is now a School Resource Officer assigned to Alma Middle School. He is married to Jacey, and they have a daughter, Avery (7), and a son named Ian (4). Jacey is a registered nurse.

As a man of faith, he is guided in his life by scripture from Philippians 4:13. "I can do all things through him that strengthens me."

Officer Cooper's commitment to serving others and the lives he has saved are examples of the tremendous impact he makes.

## Employee Spotlight



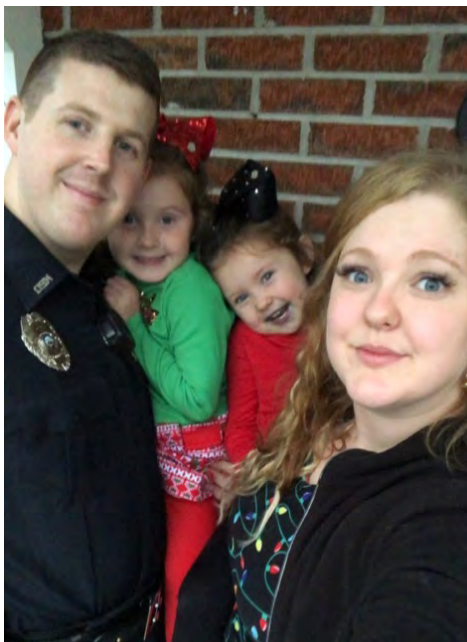
One of the characteristics of a successful organization is the loyalty and longevity of employees. The Southern States PBA has always strived to hire employees who are committed to the mission of the Southern States PBA in service to the men and women of law enforcement. On July 28th, during the Southern States PBA board meeting, service awards were presented to following employees pictured left to right: Joe Stiles (25 years) Georgia

Executive Director, Tommy Simpson (25 years) Director of Organizational Services - West Region and MS Executive Director, Joan Fabian (30 years) Operations Manager, Renee Dixon (35 years) Chief Operating Officer, J.D. Hobbie (30 years) ALPBA Executive Director, Don English (30 years) Georgia Counsel, and Larry Fallin (25 years) Facility System Director.

# Kentucky Detective is on a Mission to Disrupt the Narcotics Trade in His Community

By RANDY BYRD  
FOUNDATION AND MEDIA RELATIONS

Det. Ryan Collins has only been with the Middlesboro Police Department for three years but is making a huge dent in the narcotics trade in his city and adjoining counties. Middlesboro is a small



Ryan with his wife Rebecca and two daughters Amelia and Alaina

city located in southeastern Kentucky that borders Tennessee and Virginia. The population is around 10,000 residents. Middlesboro is the only city in the United States built inside of a crater, with mountains surrounding it on all sides.

Early this year, Det. Collins led an investigation

into what would become the largest narcotics seizure in the city's history. The investigation led to a residence in Middlesboro where a search warrant was executed. During the initial part of the search, officers seized six thousand in cash, marijuana and methamphetamine. The continuing search led to a vehicle where a large bag containing nearly two pounds of methamphetamine was found under the trunk's carpet liner. Two suspects were arrested on numerous charges.

In another investigation, Det. Collins developed information that he was able to corroborate with the Department of Homeland Security, Knox County Sheriff's Office and the Union County Sheriff's Office. The suspect was supplying Middlesboro and surrounding areas with large amounts of narcotics. With multi agency cooperation, the suspect

was arrested at his residence on an extradition warrant, and a search warrant was obtained for his residence. Almost 32,000 dollars and 14 pounds of methamphetamine was seized during the search. Homeland Security took over the investigation, making it a federal case.

Det. Collins was born and raised in Middlesboro. His mom, Donna, is a manager at a doctor's office, and his dad, Robin, is a sales manager for a company that manufacture tarps. Collins lost one older brother, Tyler to a car wreck in 2017. He left behind a son named Felix. His other brother, Blake, works at his dad's company and has a son on the way.



Officer Collins and his academy mentor Darren Allen

Collins graduated from Middlesboro High School in 2013. In high school, he was a member of the BETA club and graduated with honors. If he wasn't studying or working, you could find him in the gym.

Collins always envisioned becoming an officer, but he started a family after high school. He had worked for a factory part time in high school as part of a co-op program and this led to full time work to support his growing family.

He and his wife, Rebecca, have been married for

seven years and have two beautiful daughters, Amelia, who is 6 and Alaina, who will be 4. "Being a dad and husband is my favorite thing in the world. No matter what kind of day I may have, seeing them smile and laugh always makes everything better," he said.

After several years in factory work, a friend of his told him about some local agencies that were hiring and that he should consider it. He did his first ridealong with a Kentucky State Trooper and has been hooked ever since. His interest led to him to applying to various agencies, and his hometown agency is where he chose to start his career. Collins said, "It has been one of the best decisions I have ever made."

Collins has been very fortunate to have incredible influences who have helped him along the way. Daren Allen was his academy coordinator when

he was in rookie school. Allen has recently retired from the Kentucky State Police. Collins said, "He really instilled a fire in me to work hard every day and do your best. One of the main things he taught us was to always make sure we make it home after shift," he added.

Middlesboro Police Chief Tom Busic is also someone that Collins admires as a leader. "He is a stern leader but always has your best interest in mind," Collins said. "He truly leads by example," Collins added. Chief Busic also encouraged him to become a PBA member.

Of his PBA membership, Collins had this to say, "In today's world, we need to be prepared for everything". He added, "I have learned to expect the unexpected, and that is why being a member of the PBA is so important."



## SCHOLARSHIPS

The PBF recently, with the help of our divisions, successfully reviewed and awarded \$24,000 in scholarships to 21 of our applicants.

Follow us on our Facebook to learn about our awarded applicants.

<https://www.facebook.com/PoliceBenevolentFoundation>

Scan for more info



## Police Benevolent Foundation Develops New Challenge Coin

The Police Benevolent Foundation recently developed a new challenge coin to present to those who support the mission of the PBF. The coin was created by our operations manager, Joan Fabian, and Kris Jarvis, our director of operations.

The Police Benevolent Foundation is a tax-deductible 501(c)(3) organization established by SSPBA in 2005. The PBF provides funding to support SSPBA member benefits.

### PBF Initiatives:

**We provide financial support for the families of fallen law enforcement officers whose deaths occur in the line of duty.**

In the event of a death in the line of duty, the federal government and most states provide a death benefit that will help families recover but it may take up to a year or more before the request goes through the channels necessary to reach the family of the slain officer. In the meantime, the family has to suffer not only the death but also financial hardship.

The SSPBA accidental death benefit program provides a timely payment to a member's family worth one year's salary, up to \$70,000. Donations to the Police Benevolent Foundation help to supplement the cost of this much-needed benefit.

**We fund scholarships for children of law enforcement officers.**

The PBF and SSPBA help to bridge the gap with scholarships for deserving students of law enforcement families and those pursuing degrees in criminology. Through donations from individuals and businesses, the Foundation assists SSPBA in its efforts to support families with education expenses. The high cost of providing continued education for children is often out of reach for many American families.

**We educate law enforcement officers and their families about the dangers of Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome & Suicide Prevention.**

Research shows that the biggest threat to an officer's career may be the officer himself. Each year more than 100 officers die in the line of duty; the suicide rate is double that amount. The CDC and suicide researchers rank law enforcement suicide among the highest segment in the nation. Job-related

stress is a major contributing factor that affects the high rate of suicide in the profession. Behind the Badge is the PBF's initiative established to combat law enforcement officer suicide.

To find out more about the PBF and stay up to date on the work of the Foundation. Visit <http://www.pbfi.org/>

Like and Share on Facebook  
<https://www.facebook.com/PoliceBenevolentFoundation>

### How can I get a Coin?

We are continually looking for individuals or businesses who want to contribute to the Foundation. Anyone who makes a successful referral for a donation of \$100 or more will receive a challenge coin. All you must do is provide the contact information to Randy Byrd by email at [rbyrd@sspba.org](mailto:rbyrd@sspba.org) or call or text him at (919) 649-7710. If he secures the donation, we will send you a coin. You can also purchase a coin for the same amount and know you are donating to the PBF.



## North Carolina Endorsed Congressional Candidate gets Huge Primary Win

By COLBY FOX  
NCPBA MOUNTAIN CHAPTER PAC CHAIRPERSON

On March 26th, 2022, the NCPBA Mountain Chapter held a candidate screening for candidates running for Congress in NC House District 11 for the May 17th Republican primary. The field was crowded with six candidates seeking to oust incumbent Representative Madison Cawthorn.

The PBA political process is a time-honored tradition that has been in place for decades and was created by our founder, Charlie Maddox. This process involves the members deciding which races

to get involved in along with the issues they want to address politically.

Our members focused on several issues including the 2nd amendment, qualified immunity, Giglio, Garrity Rights, and officer privacy rights.

After approval from the legal staff, the questions are mailed to the candidates with an invitation letter. This allows the candidate the opportunity to prepare for what is essentially a job interview and to understand the significant issues facing officers.

On the day of the interview, the candidate meets with the screening committee. This group of



The NCPBA Mountain Chapter screening committee with endorsed candidate Chuck Edwards

members volunteers their time to grade the candidate responses to the questions and make recommendations to the board on final endorsements. Once the endorsements are made, all candidates are notified of their results. The board then goes to work to help the candidates get elected.

In this screening process, the Mountain Chapter chose to endorse Chuck Edwards. Chuck Edwards is currently a Senator in the North Carolina General Assembly from Henderson County. He is also a small businessman who owns several McDonald's restaurants. During his time in the Senate, Edwards has supported pro law enforcement legislation, along with serving as a co-sponsor on PBA sponsored legislation that would have given the PBA a permanent seat on the NC Criminal Justice Education and Training Standards Commission.

Upon receiving the endorsement Edwards had this to say, "It is one of my life's highest honors to receive this endorsement from the largest and most active law enforcement advocacy association in North Carolina." He continued, "These brave men and women place themselves at risk to promote public safety, create community bonds, and uphold the rule of law so that individual liberty may flourish." He added, "I am grateful that they recognize I have their backs."

David Rose, the president of the North Carolina Police Benevolent Association, said, "We are proud to endorse Chuck Edwards for Congress. He has a proven track record as a business owner, community leader and public servant. During his time in the North Carolina Senate, he has been a fierce advocate against those that would want to defund the police or otherwise erode their abilities to serve the public. In Congress, he will continue this advocacy and give the citizens of western North



NCPBA Mountain Chapter board member Colby Fox with Chuck Edwards on Election night

Carolina a steady and reasonable voice. A vote for Chuck Edwards is a vote for the men and women of law enforcement and the citizens they serve."

On April 7th, the NCPBA held a press conference in front of the Asheville Police Department. The City of Asheville has been at the forefront in the defunding the police movement, and staff shortages with the Asheville Police Department are at an all-time high. During the press conference this issue came up and was addressed by the PBA. According to the Citizen-Times newspaper, Executive Director John Midgette said, "He's introduced legislation to actually not defund the police - something we never thought in our history we would even have to think about."

On primary night, Chuck Edwards upset the incumbent and defeated the rest of the field for a huge PBA win. The PBA attended his victory celebration and is looking forward to helping him win the General Election and working with him in Washington.

## West Virginia Member Named Top Officer in the State

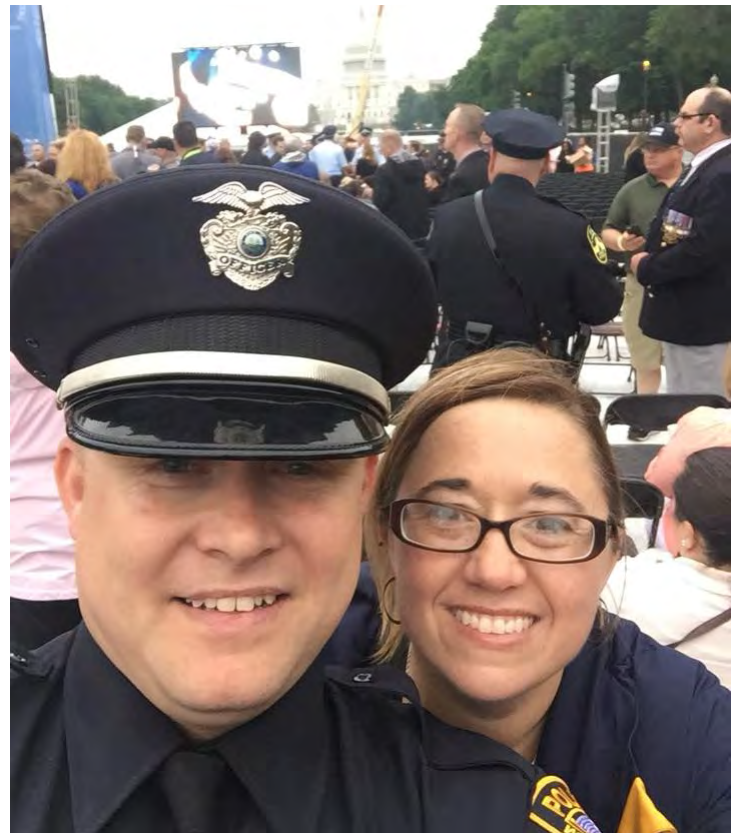
By RANDY BYRD  
FOUNDATION AND MEDIA RELATIONS



Officer Mitchell with Awards

Officer Gerald Mitchell of the Wheeling Police Department was recently named as a “Top” officer by the West Virginia Governors Highway Safety Program in a special awards ceremony in Charleston. According to the Governor’s Highway Safety Program (GHSP), they are the lead agency for West Virginia’s participation in federally mandated and funded behavioral highway safety improvement measures. The mission of the WV GHSP is to reduce crashes, injuries and fatalities on West Virginia’s roadways by encouraging, promoting, and supporting highway safety throughout the state. Officer Miller was recognized for his outstanding efforts in speed enforcement and distracted driving.

Officer Mitchell grew up in Walkersville, Md, with his parents and twin brother. Walkersville was a small community where everyone knew everyone and looked out for each other. Mitchell’s parents both worked in graphic design before his dad passed away. Mitchell still considers him to be his greatest influence in life. “He always pushed me to be greater than I thought I could be. He made sure I was an honorable man.”



Officer Mitchell and Jessica

In high school, Officer Mitchell was heavily involved in music, earning numerous county and state awards as a member of the band. His efforts earned him a full scholarship to Berklee College of Music.

He attended Shepard College for two years, and that is where he met and married his wife, Jessica. After his stint at Shepard, he ended up at Berklee to pursue a degree in Music Performance with a minor in Music Production. As life would have it, Jessica became pregnant with their first child, and he moved back home to start working.



Officer Mitchell and fellow Guardsmen

Work led to him joining the Army National Guard and serving as a Heavy Equipment Operator. His service led to deployments in Iraq and Africa and several citations and awards. In 2018, he won the coveted Schützenschnur, the German armed forces badge of marksmanship. Competition for this award occurs during joint exercises with German armed forces. Soldiers must proficiently shoot German weapons in three separate classes (Pistol, Rifle, and Heavy Weapon).

Off. Mitchell never intended to go into law enforcement until returning home from his deployment to Iraq. He felt it was a great way to continue to serve his community. He drew inspiration from a favorite scripture verse. Isaiah 6:8 says, "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, here am I; send me."

He attended the West Virginia State Police Academy before starting his career with Wheeling. He is now a seven-year veteran with time working patrol and motors. He is also a Crisis and Hostage Negotiator. Off. Mitchell is a proud PBA member and understands the importance of being a member. He said, "I decided to join the PBA because they truly care about the officer and the problems that we all face."

Off. Mitchell and Jessica have now been married for nineteen years and have three children: Isaiah, Iann, and Ileana.

In his spare time, he enjoys sailing, woodworking, fishing and riding his motorcycle.

## Louisiana Member Leads University Through Pandemic with Social Media



Officer Morse with her parents Tanya and Michael

Born in Mandeville, La, Off. Madison Morse spent her childhood moving to all four corners of the U.S while her father began his career in the Air Force.

Morse grew up surrounded by family members in law enforcement. Her family moved to Las Vegas, Nev, when she turned fifteen, as her father bridged his career from military to federal investigations. Morse and her younger sister were home schooled by their mother while living in Las Vegas. They joined local homeschool groups and a cheer program.

When she graduated high school in 2012, she did not have a clear picture of what her career path would be and claimed she would “consider all opportunities presented to her,” and that is exactly what she did.

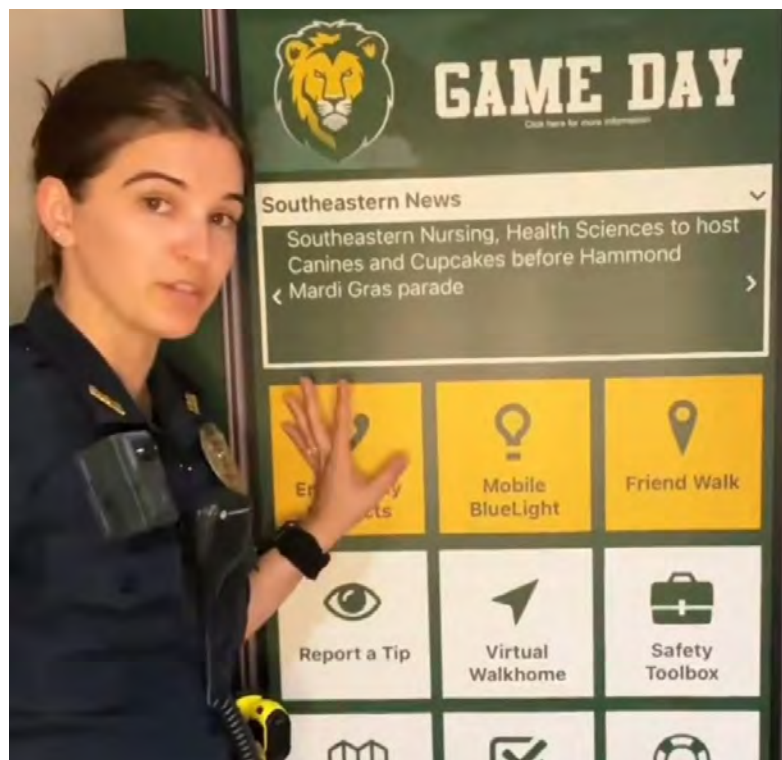
While attending Southeastern Louisiana University in Hammond, La, Morse joined Air Force ROTC through Louisiana State University. After a year

and a half, she realized the military route was not her passion, and she opted to take a new risk. In early 2017, she applied to Southeastern’s University Police Department, where she has tailored a career path for herself that she did not expect to find. According to their website, Southeastern University has over 14,000 students with 1,762 faculty and staff members and 150 plus programs of study. The police department that Morse works for employs 25 officers.



Officer Morse as a Southeastern University graduate in 2019

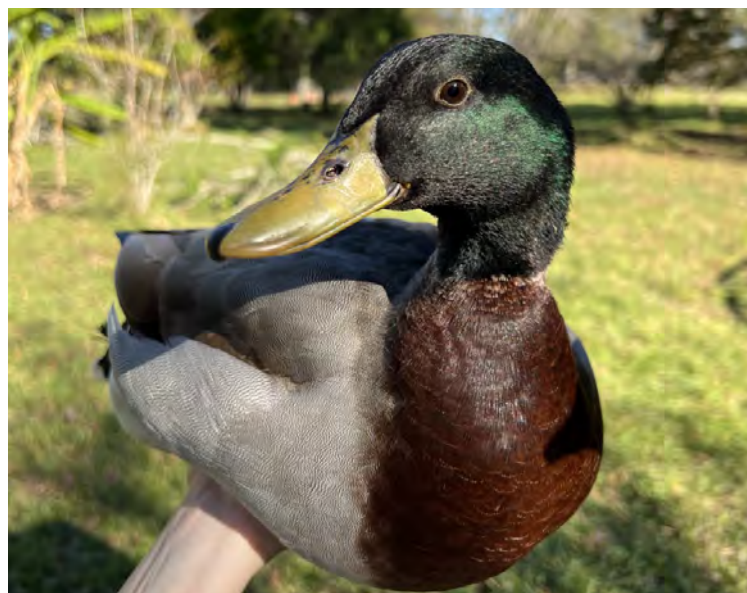
After four years as the only female officer in the department, Morse was faced with a new challenge during the Covid-19 pandemic. With students sent home for the semester, she took to social media to “community police” via TikTok. She gained traction by displaying the department golf cart as her temporary “quarantine vehicle” but skyrocketed to internet fame after dancing with a traffic cone on her head!



Officer Morse introducing Lion Safe App

Amassing 166k followers on TikTok, Morse has branched out from the traffic cones to include more educational and informational videos. Her goal is to bridge the gap between law enforcement and the Southeastern community. With the support of her chief, Michael Beckner, she strives to highlight a side of police work not seen by mainstream media. The goal was to be more approachable, as well as opening the conversations with the University community and online audience.

With this newfound passion and her traffic cones, Morse hopes to progress in her career from the road into a public relations role, focusing on community engagement and emergency management. In her spare time, Morse raises ducks with her fiancé.



Jerry

Their oldest duck, Jerry, lived with them in an apartment for three years before moving to a house with a yard big enough for all fourteen of his new friends.

Next issue of the FRONTLINE will focus on these states



If you have story ideas from these member states please email

[rbyrd@sspba.org](mailto:rbyrd@sspba.org) · [jblackburn@sspba.org](mailto:jblackburn@sspba.org)

## Alabama Pilot Turned Lawman Honored for Saving Life

By RANDY BYRD  
FOUNDATION AND MEDIA RELATIONS

Baldwin County sheriff's deputy and PBA member Trent Rowland was recognized in February with a Lifesaver Award after his quick action helped save the life of a Baldwin County resident who had overdosed on an unspecified substance.



Deputy Trent Rowland receiving the Lifesaver Award

BCSO employs 146 personnel who police a population of 44,000 citizens according to the agency's website.

Rowland's heroic deed was performed on Valentine's Day, when the deputy responded along with volunteer fire department personnel to a medical assistance call.

A citizen had overdosed and was unconscious as the firemen on the scene started CPR. Rowland retrieved Narcan from his vehicle, administered it into the nose of the citizen and, after a couple of minutes, the citizen regained consciousness and became alert and oriented. The county officer's actions saved his life.

Deputy Rowland said this lifesaving measure wouldn't have been possible without the agency issuing Narcan to every deputy.

"The command staff is to be commended for providing us the tools for a successful outcome," he said.

Rowland was born in Little Rock, Ark., and grew up in Magnolia. His parents owned a forest management company. As a child, he became

fascinated with law enforcement through his dad's best friend, Jeff Jester, an Arkansas state trooper who would bring his car over and let the youngster play with the lights and siren. Jester later retired as a captain and is chief of the Southern Arkansas University Police.

In 2005 Rowland graduated from Magnolia High School, where he played basketball, ran track and was a member of the National Honor Society. He continued his education at Louisiana Tech University, graduating in 2008 with a bachelor's degree in professional aviation and a minor in aviation management.

His first career choice was in the aviation field, where he served as a flight instructor, corporate pilot and as pilot for two emergency air care companies. His transition to law enforcement was more of a calling by his faith than a choice.

"I wanted to be part of something that would contribute positively to society and make a positive difference in people's lives," he said.

A favorite scripture also guided Rowland's transformation to public service. The scripture, Romans 8:28, reads: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

His call to duty led him to attend the 113th class of North Delta Regional Training Academy in Monroe, La. He began his law enforcement career with the Bienville Parish Sheriff's Office, and after a stint with the West Monroe Police Department, he transferred to the agency where he has been since 2019 and where he also trains new deputies as a field training officer.

Rowland and his wife, Lacey, have three children. He said Lacey's support has been a key to his successful law enforcement career.

"I owe my success to her because she is so supportive of me," he said. "She is the backbone of our family."

His greatest enjoyment in life is spending time with his family, along with hunting, fishing and, of course, flying.